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Some North American Botanists.

IV. JOHN EATON LECONTE.

Fifty years ago the writer of this notice was botanizing in the Pine barrens of New Jersey. While his quarters were in the little wayside inn at Quaker Bridge—then a kind of Mecca to which all good botanists were bound to make a pilgrimage—the entire loneliness of his sojourn was one day brightened by the arrival of a middle-aged man, of very pleasant demeanor, who came in a private vehicle from Philadelphia, and who, although then searching for certain insects, was at once seen to be an accomplished botanist. The writer had just found, at Atsion, a little below Quaker Bridge, the plant which we now call *Breweria Pickeringii*, and it was, with one possible exception, the first time it had been found in the Northern States and before it had been made known from North Carolina. The natural relationships of plants were not well understood in those days by youthful botanists; and the discoverer thought he had found a new Solanaceous plant; and was rather surprised when the gentleman told him that it was a *Convolvulus*. The gentleman was Major LeConte. During several succeeding years the writer, along with his master, Dr. Torrey, used to call in now and then and take tea with Major LeConte, at his house in New York. Mr. LeConte was a widower, with one son, an only child, then a lad, whose actual knowledge of natural history, and whose intense avidity for more, exceedingly interested and amused his older companions, and foreshadowed the entomologist who was to give new *eclat* to the name he inherited.

The following sketch, supplied to my hand, succinctly indicates the principal points in the genealogy and uneventful life of the subject of this notice.

John Eaton LeConte was born near Shrewsbury, New Jersey, February 22, 1784, and died in Philadelphia, November 21, 1860. His residence was partly in New York, where he was educated at Columbia College, partly in Georgia, where his father possessed a large tract of property in Liberty County. His family is of Huguenot descent, his ancestor, William, having left Normandy on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes to join the army of William, afterwards King of England. Thence coming to America he settled in New York, about the year 1692. His son, Peter Le-

Conte, was a highly esteemed physician in the lower part of New Jersey, and married Valeria, a daughter of John Eatton of Shrewsbury, among whose numerous descendants may be counted some of our most eminent citizens. From an early age his two sons, John LeConte and his brother Louis, showed a great love for Natural History and the observation of animals and plants. As young men they spent several years in Georgia, where they cultivated their father's plantation and occupied their leisure in the pursuit of science. Here it was that they established a botanical garden, mentioned frequently by the earlier travelers in the United States. This love of Nature and the observation of its phenomena has pervaded almost all the members of the LeConte family. About the year 1817, John LeConte entered the army of the United States as Captain of Topographical Engineers, and after serving ten years received the customary brevet as Major; but finding his health shattered by exposure during an exploration of the St. Johns River in Florida, undertaken in the line of his duty, he made a journey to Paris in 1827, where he formed the acquaintance of many of the most eminent men of science there, and with whom he subsequently kept up a correspondence. In 1832 or 1833 he resigned his commission in the army, and lived the retired life of an invalid in New York, until 1852, when he moved to Philadelphia.

His contributions to botanical and zoological science were published mostly in the Annals of the Lyceum of Natural History of New York, and in the Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia from 1852 to 1860. His extensive and valuable herbarium, which had been carefully reviewed by the older botanists of the country, was presented to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia in 1852, and was followed shortly after his death by a large collection of fresh water mollusca of the United States, containing many original specimens of species first observed by him. He was a most untiring student and left much manuscript, the usefulness of which has been superseded by subsequent research, and likewise many thousand water-color drawings of insects of various orders, which his son has had mounted in albums suitable for inspection.

No separate botanical work bears his name as author, nor any in zoology that we know of, except one on American Lepidoptera, published in connection with M. Boisduval. But the Royal Society's Catalogue of Scientific papers records the title and place and date of publication of thirty-five of them, eleven of which are botanical. Several of these are monographs. The earliest, on the U. S. species of *Paspalum*, was published in the year 1820; three others, namely, those on *Utricularia*, *Gratiola*, and *Ruellia*, all in 1824; those on *Tillandsia* and on *Viola* in 1826; that on *Pancreaticum* in 1828. He was a keen but leisurely observer and investigator, and still more leisurely writer. He was a man of very refined

and winning manners, of scholarly habits and wide reading, of an inquiring and original turn of mind, the fruitfulness of which was subdued by chronic invalidism. When he went to Paris he took with him his herbarium, which for that time was unusually rich in plants of Lower Georgia and Florida; and we remember his remark that his botanical acquaintances there made very free use of his permission to help themselves to the duplicates. There is reason to think, accordingly, that the remains of it which went to the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences will not throw all the light which might be expected upon the species of plants which were described in his published papers.

His old friends, Torrey and Wm. Cooper, named in his honor the genus which, as it proved, Rafinesque had some years earlier named *Peltandra*. And the opportunity was soon lost of commemorating his name in a plant of his own country: for Achille Richard in Paris, in 1829, bestowed the name of *Lecontia* upon a genus of Madagascar *Rubiaceæ*, now of five species. Although the name of John E. LeConte is best known to fame, it ought to be recorded that his brother, Louis, was also a keen botanist and excellent observer. The writer of this notice never knew him personally, for all but the earlier years of his life were passed upon the family plantation in Georgia. His name is mentioned in the preface as one of the contributors to Torrey & Gray's *Flora of North America*; and he deserved well of science in another respect, for he was the father of the two LeContes—President and Professor—of the University of California.—A. GRAY.

A New Walking-Fern.

(PLATE III.)

Although the variation of the common walking-fern (*Camp-tosorus rhizophyllus*) is very considerable, all the forms show a more or less auricled base. The auricles of the small forms are often so broad as to be nearly confluent with the stipe. On the other hand, I am informed by Mr. Davenport that in his herbarium are specimens with the base of the blade simply obtuse, the auricles having become quite obsolescent. But the latter is a rare occurrence, and appears to be the extreme of variation in the direction of a narrowed base. The interesting form of which an illustration is given herewith, has the striking peculiarity of an acute base without proper auricles. It was found and communicated by Mr. J. G. Haupt in Muscatine County, Iowa. It covered a few square yards, and was seen in but the one spot. The common form grew a few rods away, and by its luxuriance and large size gave prominence to the new kind.

The character of the base, together with some others, shows a considerable divergence from the typical form, and seems to indi-